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FAMOUS SPORTING PRINTS

II—THE GRAND NATIONAL

1927

"THE STUDIO" LIMITED

44 LEICESTER SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.2

THE EDITOR DESIRES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ASSISTANCE RENDERED TO HIM IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS WORK BY W. WALFORD, ESQ., MR. J. McMASTER AND MR. W. T. SPENCER, WHO HAVE KINDLY ALLOWED PRINTS IN THEIR POSSESSION TO BE REPRODUCED. THE REPRODUCTIONS HERE INCLUDED ARE "BLACKMORE TINTEX PRINTS"—A NEW METHOD UNIQUE IN THE HISTORY OF COLOUR PRINTING.

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STEEPLECHASING in England has been well illustrated by sporting artists from its very beginning. The celebrated episode which first gave practical form to the idea of the steeplechase—the midnight frolic of a party of officers—doubtless, as they used to say in that genial epoch—"slightly elevated"—is recorded in a series of famous prints. We see these merry gentlemen dashing across country with nightcaps on their heads and nightshirts flowing grotesquely over their military breeches. Cold historians have thrown some doubt on the episode itself. They point out that there is no contemporary mention of its having occurred—and that if a fact it could hardly have failed to get into the newspapers. They wish us to look upon it as a sort of Homeric myth. However this may be the prints remain, and, fact or legend, it cannot be disputed that steeplechasing began to take form in the 'thirties—and out of a general interest came the classic steeplechase, the Grand National.

For some time prior to its inception flat races were run on the Aintree course. The proprietor of the Waterloo Hotel, Mr. W. Lynn, was the lessee of the course, and organised these races with shrewd and conspicuous ability, so that they came to have a certain reputation and to attract an increasing number of spectators. Mr. Lynn was pleased but not content. He wished to have not merely one amiable fixture which would fall into an indistinguished position among many other such fixtures held at other places: but a spectacular event, a race of races, a fixture of importance attracting all the world to Liverpool and focussing them finally on the Aintree course (and the Waterloo Hotel). Looking on the course and noting its possibilities, and remembering also the new sport which was coming into vogue, he determined to hold a steeplechase, and a grand steeplechase was accordingly advertised and held at Aintree on Monday, February 29, 1836.

It was a great success and Aintree became at once a popular centre. In the following year another race was held, the appearance of the famous Irish horse Dan O'Connell (it should have been mentioned that Ireland was the original home of steeplechasing) lending an additional interest.

In 1838 the race was again run, much as before save that the obstacles which in the first instance were entirely natural were made somewhat easier. Then, in 1839, after three years under this system Mr. Lynn's health began to fail and would not permit of his maintaining the organisation of the meeting. It was therefore turned in 1839 into a sort of syndicate or company to ensure that the race should be well and properly carried on. The property was divided into 1,000 proprietorships of £25 each, and the racing

committee included the Earls of Derby, Sefton, Eglinton and Wilton. This committee was to fix the races and a Board of Directors managed the affairs, Mr. Lynn remaining a shareholder.

The first "great" steeplechase at Aintree took place on February 24, 1839. Though the term was not then actually applied to it, this is the race we look upon as the first "Grand National." It attracted an attention equal to its epoch-making character. Visitors poured in from every quarter. Crowds surged all over and were almost unmanageable. A betting room was set up at the Talbot Hotel. There were seventeen starters. There was enormous impatience, for the race scheduled to start at one did not start until three. (Procrastination, however, had been a tradition since 1836.) It did start at length and Captain Becher led over the first fence, a high obstacle of gorse and hawthorn. After three or four fences came a deep ditch five feet wide, with a high bank on the further side. Then came ploughed land followed by a paling. Next a hedge. Next a brook six feet wide at which point Captain Becher (on Conrad) came down, immortalising himself in the fall, for the brook was to be known in perpetuity as Becher's brook. After this was a high hedge with a water jump, and then the "Table Jump," a jump into a field four feet higher than the place of taking off. After some fences came the made-up stone wall five feet high. Such was the course and such the race, which has been engraved for us in the spirited plates herewith reproduced in colour.

Since 1839 the race has steadily strengthened its position in the public esteem, despite the fact that on occasion, when some of the obstacles were altered, mourning and lamentation has arisen from the Die-hards who looked back to the day when fences were fences: and that at one period the Press complained bitterly that the jumps were ridiculous. The "Liverpool and National Steeplechase" has finally attained the simple eminence of Grand National. As such long may it remain. Our illustrations enshrine its origin and depict it with an artistic fire which, it is to be feared in this photographic era, will never be devoted to it again.

T. Romford.

PLATE I

LIVERPOOL GREAT NATIONAL STEEPLE-CHASE, 1839.

I. COLOURED AQUATINT, $15\frac{7}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{4}$ INS. ENGRAVED BY

J. HARRIS AFTER F. C. TURNER

By courtesy of W. Walford, Esq.

The Nun, Charity, Paulina, Pioneer, Railroad, Rambler, Seventy-Four, Daxon, Cannon Ball, Conrad, Barkston, Rust, Lottery, Dictator, Cramp, Jerry, True Blue, Jack.

Earl Sefton and Mr. Lynn are to be seen on the extreme left.

As a painter of racing and hunting subjects F. C. Turner has a considerable place in the school of early sporting artists. His power of spirited composition is well illustrated in the set from which we here reproduce three plates.

PLATE II

LIVERPOOL GREAT NATIONAL STEEPLE-CHASE, 1839.

II. COLOURED AQUATINT, $15\frac{7}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{4}$ INS. ENGRAVED BY J. HARRIS AFTER F. C. TURNER

By courtesy of W. Walford, Esq.

Lord Eglinton's *Pioneer*. Captain Childe's *Conrad*. Mr. Kent's *Rust*. Mr. Stephenson's *True Blue*. Mr. S. J. Oswell's *Dictator*. Captain Lamb's *Jack*. Mr. Elmore's *Lottery*. Mr. Wm. Haddy's *Cannon Ball*. Mr. J. H. Leeche's *Charity*. Sir E. Mostyn's *Seventy-Four*. Lord Macdonald's *The Nun*.

PLATE III

LIVERPOOL GREAT NATIONAL STEEPLE-CHASE, 1839.

IV. COLOURED AQUATINT, $15\frac{7}{8} \times 25\frac{1}{2}$ INS. ENGRAVED BY J. HARRIS AFTER F. C. TURNER

By courtesy of W. Walford, Esq.

Mr. Elmore's *Lottery*. Sir E. Mostyn's *Seventy-Four*. Mr. C. Marshall's *Railroad*. Mr. Stephenson's *True Blue*. Capt. Lamb's *Jack*. Lord Chesterfield's *Paulina*. Lord Eglinton's *Pioneer*. Lord Macdonald's *The Nun*.

PLATE IV

LIVERPOOL GRAND NATIONAL STEEPLECHASE.

COLOURED AQUATINT, 19 × 30 INS. ENGRAVED BY

E. G. HESTER. PAINTED BY J. STURGESS

By courtesy of Mr. W. T. Spencer.

An interesting Victorian illustration of the great race, more naturalistic than the plates in the two fine early sets we reproduce but not so vigorous.

PLATE V

LIVERPOOL GRAND STEEPLE CHASE, 1839.

I. "STONE WALL. FIRST ROUND."

COLOURED AQUATINT, $17\frac{3}{4} \times 26\frac{3}{4}$ INS. DRAWN AND ENGRAVED BY CHARLES HUNT

By courtesy of Mr. J. McMaster.

Powell on *Railroad*. Mason on *Lottery*. Hardy on *Charity*. Barker on *True Blue*. A. M'Donough on *The Nun*. Oliver on *Seventy-Four*. Morgan on *Rambler*. Carlin on *Dictator*. Martin on *Paulina*. Walker on *Pioneer*. Ferguson on *Daxon*.

Charles Hunt was a well-known engraver of the early nineteenth century, responsible for numerous plates after Charles Towne, James Pollard, H. Alken, J. F. Herring and F. C. Turner; as well as original engravings like the fine set here illustrated.

PLATE VI

LIVERPOOL GRAND STEEPLE CHASE, 1839.

II. "BROOK 2ND. SECOND ROUND."

COLOURED AQUATINT, $18\frac{1}{8} \times 27$ INS. DRAWN AND ENGRAVED BY CHARLES HUNT.

By courtesy of Mr. J. McMaster.

Mason on *Lottery*. Oliver on *Seventy-Four*. Powell on *Railroad*. Carlin on *Dictator*. A. M'Donough on *The Nun*. Ferguson on *Daxon*. Byrne on *Barkston*. Barker on *True Blue*. Martin on *Paulina*. Wadlow on *Jack*. Walker on *Pioneer*. Morgan on *Rambler*.

PLATE VII

LIVERPOOL GRAND STEEPLE CHASE, 1839.

III. "BROOK 3RD. SECOND ROUND."

COLOURED AQUATINT, $17\frac{3}{4} \times 27$ INS. DRAWN AND ENGRAVED BY CHARLES HUNT.

By courtesy of Mr. J. McMaster.

Carlin on *Dictator*. Mason on *Lottery*. Oliver on *Seventy-Four*. Powell on *Railroad*. Martin on *Paulina*. Barker on *True Blue*. Walker on *Pioneer*. Morgan on *Rambler*.

PLATE VIII

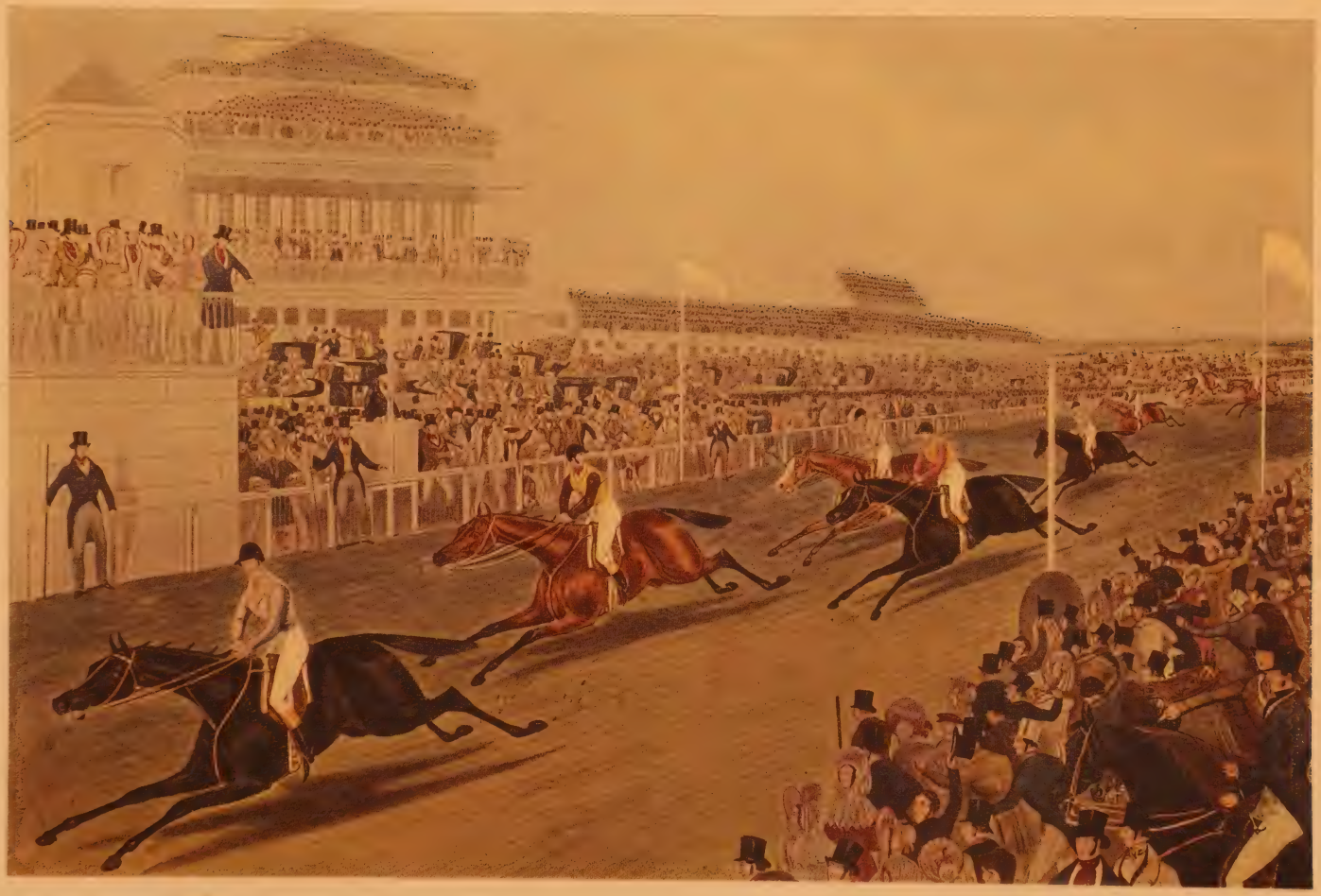
LIVERPOOL GRAND STEEPLE CHASE, 1839.

IV. "COMING IN."

COLOURED AQUATINT, 18⅛ × 27 INS. DRAWN AND ENGRAVED BY CHARLES HUNT.

By courtesy of Mr. J. McMaster.

Mason on *Lottery*. Oliver on *Seventy-Four*. Martin on *Paulina*. Barker on *True Blue*. A. M'Donough on *The Nun*. Powell on *Railroad*. Wadlow on *Jack*. Walker on *Pioneer*.



HITA/.